853 A child is nursed for two or even three years, and theoretically, a woman should abstain from sexual intercourse throughout this period. In practice, however, the period of three months mentioned above is the limit of such abstention.

854 Childhood. While he is small, the child remains with his mother, whether she cares for him herself, has him cared for by a slave especially designated for the duty, or turns him over to one of her daughters.

During the nursing period of two or even three years, he is carried astraddle by his mother or some other person entrusted with his care until his legs are strong enough for him to run about the house and its vicinity.

857 At about six or eight years old, he is drawn into the juvenile organization known as n-tomo, and he never fails to join it as soon as he is welcome. Little girls are less free; they are kept at home and put to work at household duties, such as bringing water and wood and watching the fire.

881 Puberty. As we shall see, the n-tomo prepares the child for the soli, a ceremony which marks the most important event of his life, civil puberty. The essential but not the only rite involved in this ceremony is circumcision. In principle, the soli is limited to pubescent boys and this implies that all who go through the ceremony have physically reached puberty. Aside from the fact, however, that this condition is reached at differing ages, the boys who undergo the ceremony differ in age because the soli does not take place every year, owing to the considerable expense involved.

882 When the soli is behind him, a boy is no longer a child; he is not exactly a man either, but rather is a "young master," a kamalen'. Since he is admitted to the brotherhoods, apparently his discretion can be counted on, and he is considered competent to take an oath so he can be called upon to testify in a dispute. Also, if he is enterprising enough to attract attention to himself, he is given trifling missions which inspire him to persevere. Furthermore, since by now he has been made sophisticated by his companions in the n-tomo, his relations with his female companion

882 836

844 Before delivery of her child, a woman is advised to pound grain. When the labor pains come, the woman retires to her hut with several matrons (men are not allowed access). If the child is poorly presented, the priest is called. He performs outside the hut, simulating the delivery and chanting the formulas that ease labor. To deliver the infant, the woman kneels with her hands thrown behind her, while the midwife supports the small of her back. At birth the infant's shoulders must touch the ground; this is the moment when he receives his spiritual principles. The infant is washed several times and smeared with karite butter.

846 The mother must not go out during the first eight days after the
853 birth; she must devote herself entirely to the new-born. She massages
854 his head daily in order to give it a more rounded form, and she pinches his nose. She nurses the infant for the first two years, then the weaned child passes directly to the communal calabash. Until the child can walk, the mother carries it astraddle on her back with the aid of a loincloth knotted at her chest. In this manner the infant accompanies the mother everywhere, to work as well as to the dance.
868 It is during these intimate contacts that the mother teaches her child to talk. Later, the little girls stay with their mothers who teach them all the domestic arts, while the boys are educated in outside work.
[867] During their childhook they are taught the usages and rules of deport-
201 ment: a woman knows she must never shake the hand of a man to
576 greet him, and, if he extends his hand, she flings up her arm "as a sign of not being interested." A man will salute his superior by extending his hand palm upwards, and the superior will put his over it; inversely, when a man greets an inferior he extends his hand with the palm down, while for an equal his hand will be perpendicular to the ground. If a man must ask someone's pardon, he puts his hands behind his back to simulate the tail of an animal (for he has acted like an animal). Crossing the hands in front of or upon the head is a sign of sadness. To mark his submission to a king, a man puts his right elbow to the ground. To pray to God, the two hands are extended with the palms turned [89] outward. A woman learns that it is im-
576 pudent to question her husband during the day, and when she speaks
593 of him, she says koke, that is, big brother, for she cannot pronounce
833 his name or in any way recall the bonds which exist between them. It is only during the two consecutive nights that she couples with him

626 Every seducer who has paid the fine demanded by the fiancé can walk with head held high, for he has satisfied justice, cleansed his honor, and his shield is unstained. But let him not be careless enough to go to the village of the injured fiancé, for he will be /164/ beaten hard by the young people; his exclusion often lasts for years.

010 Now, there is no reason to be surprised at the Bambara attitude toward adultery and fornication. If it can all be reduced to a violated principle of justice and nothing more, that is because they have fallen so low that they believe they were created and put in the world by God in order to enjoy the pleasures of the flesh as much as possible.

Abortion

562 Monsieur Louis Barbier wrote in the "Quinzaine" (January 16, 1906) /"Étude sur les populations Bambaras de la Vallée du Niger (A Study of the Bambara Peoples of the Niger Valley)"/: "The Bambara woman is a machine to produce children and do heavy work." In this statement he expresses, I am sure, the belief of all Europeans who have stayed among the Negroes without mingling with them or living their life. If the Bambara woman "is a machine to produce children," [563] it is a slow machine. I know families where there are seven and eight children by the same wife, but that is unusual; the average remains two or three children per woman.

●853 837 It is not through frequent childbearing or because they are prolific that Bambara women lose their charms and wither. They do not, and cannot, conceive but every two or three years; they cannot bear a child more than once every three or four years, since every mother nurses her child for at least two whole years, and quite often three, and during all that time she may not conceive. Does she remain continent during that time? What is to be thought of these utterances on the part of a husband:

A ye den soro a ti son toun.
She has had a child, she wants no more relations with me.
Né t'a don toun, ne tigouéré a la toun.
I do not know her any more, I no longer go near her.